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U.S. Provides \$2 Million to Fund the Special Court of Sierra Leone

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE – Over the weekend, the United States government announced that it will contribute an additional \$2 million to fund the Special Court for Sierra Leone through to its conclusion. U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Criminal Justice Stephen Rapp made the announcement during his visit October 5-8 in Freetown with Special Court personnel, civil society and Sierra Leonean government officials.

“The Special Court played an indispensable role in contributing to justice and an enduring peace in Sierra Leone,” Rapp said. “Its judgments have sent a message that no person is above the law, and recognized the suffering of tens of thousands of victims by holding powerful individuals responsible for mass murder, amputations, rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, attacks on peacekeepers, use of child soldiers, terror, and pillage.”

The United States has long been one of the Special Court’s largest contributors, and the new grant demonstrates the United States’ commitment to ensuring that the Court is able to complete its final phase and transition to a Residual Special Court. Ambassador Rapp called for continued support by the international community to permit the Special Court to complete its mandate and achieve justice.

During his meetings, Ambassador Rapp learned about efforts by the Government of Sierra Leone and the Special Court to incorporate training and lessons learned from the Special Court in the national judicial system. He stressed the importance of ensuring a strong legacy for the Special Court through knowledge transfer and reliance on the cadre of trained personnel who can now bring their skills to bear in the domestic system.

The Special Court, established in January 2002, is the first international criminal tribunal to be funded entirely from voluntary contributions from governments. The Court is mandated to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law committed in Sierra Leone since November 30, 1996.

Ambassador Rapp served as prosecutor of the Special Court from 2007 to 2009.